

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE~~

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

24 DEC 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: NVA Infiltration

I am concerned that the North Vietnamese infiltration numbers displayed in recent intelligence summaries may be misleading and could easily be misinterpreted. Therefore, in the interest of clarification, I am summarizing the facts as I understand them.

Infiltration Arrivals.

Total infiltration arriving in RVN and Cambodia during calendar year 1970 is only 52 percent of that in 1969 and 22 percent of that in 1968. However, this year NVA soldiers are infiltrating in large numbers to Southern Laos for the first time.

- Arrivals in RVN and Cambodia totaled about 54,000 in 1970 compared to 105,000 in 1969 and 244,000 in 1968.
- 20,000 NVA soldiers in several new units arrived in Southern Laos in 1970.. Numbers in prior years were negligible.

Infiltration Starts.

The number of men leaving North Vietnam and heading for South Vietnam and Cambodia in 1970 will be about the same as in 1969 but far less than in 1968.

- Starts for RVN and Cambodia will total about 79,000 to 87,000 in 1970. The comparable figures for 1969 and 1968 were 85,000 and 241,000, respectively.
- The number of men leaving North Vietnam and heading for the battlefield in SVN and Cambodia during recent months, October to December, (31,000-39,000) is larger than last year (18,500), about the same as in 1968 (38,100), but below 1967. In addition, about 8,000 men have started toward Southern Laos, presumably to protect the road and trail network from attack by friendly guerrillas or the ARVN.

OSD Review Completed

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-- The number of troops scheduled to arrive in South Vietnam during the first three months of 1971 shows a similar pattern - above the levels of a year ago, about the same as two years ago (1969) but well below 1968.

Implications.

The implication of the infiltration data can be interpreted in various ways. I hope to have a full assessment after my trip to Southeast Asia next month. However, I would like to point out that the number of men arriving in South Vietnam and Cambodia during 1970 is below our best estimates of enemy losses during the year. It is doubtful that in-country recruiting is large enough to make up the difference. Loss estimates are tenuous, but it appears that the VC/NVA lost 150,000 to 200,000 men during the past year. With the exception of one new regiment destined for COSVN, the NVA projected to arrive in SVN/Cambodia during January-March will be used to replace past and projected losses, not to support any significant buildup in the threat.

